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SUBJECT: NATIONAL ELECTION RESULTS COULD IMPACT SAARLAND COALITION BUILDING

Sensitive but unclassified; not for internet distribution.

¶11. (U)SUMMARY: Saarland, the small, picturesque German state on the French border, remains in transition following its August 30 state elections, when no party won a clear majority. Despite its uncertain state, the Saarland parliamentary session opened this week on September 23. Speculation about possible coalitions continues, with no clear answers. A Social Democratic Party (SPD)-Left-Green (Red-Red-Green) or a Jamaica coalition (SPD-Green-Christian Democratic Union) appear the most likely. The long-shot may be a CDU-SPD Grand Coalition. A decision is expected following the Greens' statewide convention on October 11th. All parties agree that the national interest in their coalition negotiations will decrease following the national parliamentary election on September 27. END SUMMARY

LEFT PARTY AS PROBLEM CHILD

¶12. (SBU)The Left Party, which pulled 21.3% of the vote in the August 30 elections, entered the Saarland parliament for the first time this year. They did so with a bang. Rolf Linsler, the chairman of the Left Party, opened the session as he was the "Chairman of Seniority" (Chairman most senior in age.) Rather than stick to the usual non-partisan comments, Linsler delivered an energetic speech on how changes in German culture (due to the failures of past governments) had resulted in political gain for the Left Party. All other parties uniformly viewed these comments with disapproval. The chairman of the FDP, Christoph Hartmann, told us that this opening was emblematic of the Left Party and their occasionally problematic personality. He anticipated that a Jamaica coalition would result, since the Greens have noted their discomfort with Left Party personalities.

THE GREENS IN POWER

¶13. (U)All parties continue to view the Greens Party as the "Kingmaker" in Saarland, since the Greens' chosen coalition will prevail. The Greens will have its party members make the decision on coalition partners. They are holding three regional meetings in the coming weeks, with the final decision to be made on October 11th at a Saarland state party convention. Formal discussions between the Greens and the SPD and the CDU began earlier this month, while the Greens met with both the Left Party and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) on September 24 and 25 following the Parliamentary Session.

¶14. (SBU)According to Green parliamentarian, Markus Schmitt, a Red-Red-Green government appears to be the most likely, because the parties are closer on key issues. Although Schmitt acknowledges personality tensions between the Left Party and Greens, he said that they would not be a determining factor, as the strength of Green and SDP relations would allow a Red-Red-Green coalition to succeed.

Schmitt personally prefers a CDU-FDP-Green (Jamaica) government, as he feels such a coalition would set an example for the national level.

HEIKO MAAS AND A DISPLACED CDU

¶ 15. (SBU) In the meantime, the CDU General Secretary, Stefan Toscani, has been required to move to a new office in the Parliament building so that the Left Party could occupy his old one (The Left leader Oscar Lafontaine literally took over Toscani's old room). This apparently was not meant as a symbolic move since The Left actually did need space in the building. Toscani still believes that the CDU could have a place in government. He, like Schmitt from the Greens, believes that a Jamaica coalition would be ideal, because it would set a precedent, serve as a model for the national level, and would work well. He posited however that the SPD was striving to make a Red-Red-Green government because its leader, Heiko Maas, desperately longs to become Minister-President and eventually rise to the national level.

¶ 16. (SBU) Both Toscani and SPD Leader Heiko Maas himself also acknowledged that a Grand Coalition is not entirely out of the question. Generally, the CDU and SPD in Saarland do not get along well; however, according to Maas, if a Grand Coalition forms nationally, pressure may come down to form one in Saarland. Maas and his SPD colleague, parliamentarian Ulrich Comercon, however, favor a SPD-Left-Green coalition, saying that it would succeed because the SPD and Left agree ideologically. Comercon also assessed that the Greens would not want to govern with the CDU because the CDU had antagonized them in the past. Comercon further highlighted the popularity of Lafontaine in Saarland as the reason

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for why the Left should be in government.

¶ 17. (SBU) Comment: The coalition options in Saarland remain open, with rampant speculation on all fronts. Whether close party ideologies can overcome personality differences with regard to The Left Party remain to be seen. Ultimately, what happens in the national election on September 27 may also influence how things unfold in Saarland, given both CDU and SPD comments that a Grand Coalition remains possible. End Comment.

¶ 18. (U) Consulate General Frankfurt coordinated this report with Embassy Berlin

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